United Nations A/65/307

General Assembly

Distr.: General
18 August 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fifth session
Items 15 and 27 of the provisional agenda*

Culture of peace

Social development

Letter dated 13 August 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you the attached information on the restoration of the historical and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan (see annex).

I would highly appreciate it if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under items 15 and 27 of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Murad **Askarov**
Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Uzbekistan

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Annex to the letter dated 13 August 2010 from the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Restoring the historical and archaeological heritage and cultural and spiritual values of Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is an ancient civilization and rich in culture. No Central Asian republic is home to a larger number of historical and ancient cultural monuments than Uzbekistan. The country is in itself a most valuable repository of unique historical and archaeological monuments from different eras, from the emergence of humankind to the creation of major nation-States of ancient times. It was no accident that archaeological explorations in Uzbekistan have led to the recognition of archaeology as a separate historical discipline. Its development, moreover, has been marked by a whole host of amazing discoveries of global significance.

Since gaining its independence, Uzbekistan has maintained the revival of its culture and spirituality and the restoration of its real history and individuality as a priority in its policies. Islam Karimov has said that the rehabilitation of spiritual values is an organic and natural process in the growth of national self-awareness and a return to the spiritual source or the roots of the nation.[1]

Having rightly recognized that spiritual and cultural values represent the foundation for development and the driving force behind national self-determination, the Uzbek government, led by its President, has been actively promoting Uzbek customs, traditions and values. All national and religious celebrations or holidays, such as Nowruz, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, have been reinstated. Islam, the sacred religion of the country's forefathers, has also been reintroduced. Embodying high moral and humanitarian principles, Islam has always played a unifying role, and has synthesized millenniums of experience in the spiritual development of our people. Old mosques have been reconstructed and new ones built. A number of new educational institutions have also been established, including the Tashkent Islamic University. The countless cultural and historic monuments, which are masterpieces and the pride of the nation, have been duly restored. New memorial sites have been built, including the Memorial of Remembrance and Commemoration, the Imam al-Bukhari and al-Ferghani sites, the Tamerlane museum and many others, which combine traditional oriental architecture with modern architectural elements and are renowned for their elegance and grandeur.

Tashkent was declared Islamic Culture Capital in 2007 by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in recognition by the international community of Uzbekistan's outstanding contribution to both Muslim and global civilization.

[1] Karimov, I. A., *Uzbekistan On the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century: Challenges to Stability and Progress*, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 1997.

Uzbekistan's independence has aided the current revival of the nation's cultural and spiritual values. The great wealth of its historical and archaeological heritage and rich history have also played a key role.

Archaeological materials and discoveries have been essential in charting a number of important historical developments, and often proved the only source of information, particularly in the area of the origin of humankind and primitive cultures. The first traces of the earliest inhabitants of our country's territory were discovered half a century ago. In the last few decades alone, discoveries have been made of global significance, representing a great historical breakthrough. With the discovery and study of monuments dating back to the Stone Age in Southern Fergana and the Tashkent Oasis, Uzbekistan has joined the list of places in the world to have witnessed the beginning of human evolution. These monuments have been determined to be from 450,000 to 500,000 years old. By far the most significant discovery, however, has been the discovery of prehistoric human remains in the Obirahmat cave at the Tashkent Oasis. The study of these remains has changed perceptions of the origins of modern man. In contrast to the outdated stages-of-man idea of evolution, modern science has confirmed the view that different pre-historic races coexisted together and may have cross-bred. The inhabitant of the Obirahmat cave, who lived from 50,000 to 70,000 years ago, is an example of such crossbreeding in human evolution. These findings fit in with the latest breakthroughs made by researchers from all over the world who have been studying the process using materials uncovered in Africa, Portugal, France and the Middle East.

Another important area which has advanced the current research of Uzbek archaeologists has been the progress made in the study of ancient civilizations and the origins of cities in Uzbek territory. Archaeologists have been able to establish two distinct geographical areas in the development of ancient Uzbekistan: an arable farming area in the South, and an agro-pastoral area in the North, which developed slightly later. The work of Uzbek researchers has shown that the arable agricultural civilization of the first ancient oriental cities, discovered in the South of Uzbekistan in the twentieth century, covered a wider area than previously thought. It has now been established that it occupied a vast area to the North, from Amu-Dar'ya (Bactria) to Zarafshan (Central Sogdiana). This civilization was called Bactrian Margiana and dated from the second half of the third century to the middle of the second century B.C.E. It is notable for the highly developed architectural and construction skills on display in its fortresses and palaces and its major ideological centres, temple-fortresses where the rituals held were similar to those found later in Zoroastrianism.

Bactria is associated with the beginning of statehood in Central Asia. It was mentioned in the Assyrian annals dating back to the eighth Century B.C.E., with its golden age, the Kushan Empire, from the first to fourth centuries C.E. Characterized by a blend of local traditions combined with Greek and Indian influences, it ranked among the largest empires of the East and had its own forms of architecture, sculpture and painting. There are examples of both secular and religious art at the Khalchayan and Dalverzintepa sites (Surkhandarya province). Unique Buddhist painting and sculpture can be found at Karatepe and Fayaztepe in Old Termez, where masterpieces such as the famous sculptural frieze of Airtam were created. The frieze is commonly known as the Triad and is a depiction of the Buddha with two monks. It dates from the second to third centuries C.E. Nowadays, the gallery of

Buddhist sculpture is complemented by discoveries made by Uzbek-French and Uzbek-Japanese expeditions to Termez. This form of art developed further in the early Middle Ages. The temple on the site of Kuva in Fergana provided evidence of this and its many sculptures are now carefully preserved in museums. This priceless heritage from our ancient sculptors is an integral part of the artistic treasure of our nation.

Important discoveries have been made in recent times on the site of Kampirtepa in Surkhandarya. It is a port city on the Amu-Dar'ya with a fortress dating back to the second century B.C.E. and has been almost entirely excavated by archaeologists. This monument is maintained as an important historical site and tourist attraction. Its walls and towers have been reconstructed using ancient methods.

The ancient civilization of Khorezm, similarly discovered by archaeologists, has also been enriched in recent decades not only by new monuments, but also by modern interpretations of its origins. The ancient culture of Khorezm began in the delta of Amu-Dar'ya in the early part of the first millennium B.C.E., while the civilization itself and its ancient cities started developing about 2,700 years ago, strongly influenced from the South by Bactria and Margiana. It is thought that the Khorezm State had established itself by the middle of the first millennium B.C.E.

The large settlement of Kazatly-yatgan, discovered in the right-bank area of Khorezm, is recognized as the ancient capital of the early Khorezm kingdom. Archaeologists have also discovered groupings of palaces and temples which house some of the oldest known wall paintings in Central Asia, including the Gallery of Kings. Sculptures and ancient Khorezm writings have also been found.

The Central Asian civilization, as part of the East, was highly urbanized. Medieval Arab geographers noted that no other region in the East had such a large number of prosperous cities as Mavarannahr, the Central Asian Mesopotamia, which had more than 200 cities. Many of them dated back to ancient times, to the very formation of the State.

Researchers are continuing with their comprehensive studies of historically significant, modern-day cities dating back to ancient times. These cities include: Samarkand, Bukhara, Karshi, Shahrisabz, Termez and Tashkent, Khiva, and the centres of the Fergana valley and the Tashkent Oasis. Excavations at the cities have helped to shed light on the development of the State, the relationship between urban and rural settlements, the country's economy as a whole and its role in the integration processes of the Central Asian peoples.

These achievements of Uzbek archaeology are merely a few milestones in the development of archaeology. Uzbek archaeologists have allied their traditional research methods to new interdisciplinary practices, such as GIS and GPS systems which help to record stages in the development of settlement sites and clusters of settlements. The chronological charting of historical geographical development, previously performed using a complex system of maps, is now done using computers.

With a view to improving absolute chronology, archaeologists in Central Asia employ data from the natural sciences, and continually develop radiocarbon, potassium-argon and dendrochronological dating methods.

However, the study of the rich archaeological heritage of Uzbekistan is but one scientific aspect of the issue. A no less important task is the preservation of priceless monuments to the past of the Uzbek people and the conservation of the most prominent among them using modern methods to make them into international tourist attractions.

A key task in the restoration of the historical and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan is to continue to identify and protect cultural artefacts. This work is governed by the law on the protection and use of archaeological heritage sites, which was adopted by the legislative chamber of Uzbekistan on 16 June 2009. This law has intensified efforts to protect previously unknown cultural monuments. There are currently 4,000 archaeological sites protected by the law, but that number is expected to grow rapidly in the future.

A report on monuments from the Uzbekistan regions is currently being drafted and preparation for their inclusion on a protected list is already under way, in accordance with UNESCO's international standards for heritage protection. This work is carried out jointly by archaeologists and the relevant heritage protection authorities of the Uzbek Ministry of Cultural and Sports Affairs.

In addition to architectural restoration, many conservation efforts have been made during the years of Uzbekistan's independence. Modern techniques have been applied to protect unique monuments from different eras, including: the Buddhist temples in Surkhandarya; forts in Bukhara and Samarkand; the palace complexes of ancient Khorezm; and the site of Mingurik, the ancient urban centre of Tashkent.

More than 1,000 archaeological and architectural monuments have been restored in total. This aids both the preservation of the cultural heritage of Uzbekistan and the study of monuments from ancient civilizations, although difficulties in this area do remain.

One of the most important aspects of the spiritual rebirth of Uzbekistan is the revival of its true history, particularly with regard to the era of Tamerlane, the period from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, the Jadid movement, the national liberation movements, and the period of Soviet totalitarian control. This has helped to shed objective light on these historical events and processes and regain the long-withheld pages of the history of Uzbekistan. Also restored have been the names of great Uzbek forefathers, unjustly forgotten during the years of the colonial regime, names such as Imam al-Bukhari, Imam al-Termezi, Baha' al-Din Naqshband, Hoja Ahmad Yasawi, Tamerlane, Boborahim Mashrab, Burhan al-Din al-Margiloni and others, who contributed enormously not only to Uzbek culture, but also to the riches of global civilization.

Its rich historical heritage, spiritual and moral traditions and priceless contribution to global culture have been the foundation and calling card for Uzbekistan as it has become a global player and initiated a foreign policy and foreign trade activities. In speaking about Uzbekistan's entry into the global community, President Islam Karimov has said that Uzbekistan was in favour of integration in the spiritual sphere, as well as in science, culture, education and information.[2] Such integration undoubtedly contributes to the international demonstration of the rich cultural and historical heritage of Uzbekistan and

[2] Karimov I. A., *Po Puti Cozidaniya* [on the path of creation], Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 1994.

guarantees successful economic and political reform in the country, as well as progress in science and technology.

The accession of Uzbekistan to UNESCO in October 1993 has played an important role in the country's integration into the international spiritual community. UNESCO is a universal international body which brings together national systems for science, culture and education, while enriching them with the combined experience of global intellectual development, and introduces the peoples of the world to the rich spiritual history of all humankind.

A historical perspective and the restoration of an objective and truthful history of Uzbekistan have been of great significance in the revival and growth of national self-awareness. The Government has issued numerous rulings to further the study of the country's history and statehood. In this regard, the work of the country's scientists and civil-society organizations has been very helpful. One of the most actively involved was a leading centre for historical research — the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Institute has published scientific and popular science literature covering various periods and previously unconsidered issues in the history of the Uzbek people.

The celebration of anniversaries of ancient cities and great forefathers plays a special role in the revival of the spiritual heritage of Uzbekistan and in securing its international recognition. Following a ruling by the Government of Uzbekistan, there were extensive national celebrations of the 600th anniversary of the great scholar and ruler Mirzo Ulugbek (1994), the 660th anniversary of the great statesman and military leader Tamerlane (1996), the 1,225th anniversary of the great thinker and hadith scholar al-Bukhari and the 1,200th anniversary of the famous scientist al-Farghani (1998), the 2,700th anniversary of the Avesta (2001), the 1,000th anniversary of the heroic epic Alpamish, and the 800th anniversary of the great son of the Uzbek nation Manguberdi (1999), the 1,300th anniversary of Imam Maturidi and the 910th anniversary of al-Margiloni (2000), and the anniversary of the Academy of Mamun (2006). These anniversaries were included in the list of UNESCO calendar events and widely celebrated at the international level. A decision by UNESCO also led to the celebration of the anniversaries of a number of cities whose ages were determined by archaeological research: Samarkand celebrated its 2,750th anniversary (2007) and Qarshi its 2,700th (2006), while Bukhara (1997), Khiva (1997) and Termez celebrated their 2,500th anniversary (2002), Tashkent its 2,200th (2009), and Margilan its 2,000th anniversary (2007).

Why were these activities carried out on such a wide scale? Some foreign researchers have written about the activities of our great ancestors in an ambiguous and at times biased manner. These international conferences have contributed to full, comprehensive and objective coverage of the activities and creative work of these individuals. They also confirm our country's new priorities and definitely constitute a great success for young Uzbek diplomacy and our country's researchers.

It is worth mentioning that the international anniversary events included the Mirzo Ulugbek week held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in 1994, which began with an international symposium on Mirzo Ulugbek and the time of the great Timurids.[3] During the celebration, there was an exhibition on Ulugbek and traditional art, which provided visitors with information not only about the life and

[3] *Narodnoye Slovo* [voice of the people], 24 October 1994.

work of Mirzo Ulugbek but also about the time he lived in, the Timurid dynasty and the contemporary development of Uzbek folk arts and crafts.

The Ulugbek Week held by UNESCO was an opportunity for inhabitants and guests in Paris to learn about Uzbekistan and its rich cultural and spiritual heritage and the great changes that have taken place in the short period of time since independence.

One outcome of the continuing research efforts on the activity of Mirzo Ulugbek has been the holding of an international conference in 2009 on Mirzo Ulugbek and his contribution to the development of world science. The conference was timed to coincide with the International Year of Astronomy declared by UNESCO.

A scientific conference and an exhibition on the progress of science, culture and education during the time of the Timurid dynasty were held to celebrate the anniversary of Tamerlane at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in April 1996.

At the opening ceremony, President Karimov noted quite rightly that one of the historical missions of Tamerlane had been for the States of Asia and Europe to see themselves, for the first time in history, as sharing the same geopolitical space.

The visitors to the exhibition, including the President of France at that time, Mr. Jacques Chirac, and the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor, became acquainted with the artefacts on display, which reflected the scientific and cultural heritage of the period of Tamerlane and the Timurids (valuable manuscripts, coins, items of clothing and so on), and also with contemporary works relating to the period of the Timurids by Uzbek artists and craftsmen.

In June 1997, a week of events was devoted to an important date, the 2,500th anniversary of the ancient cities of Bukhara and Khiva. The programme for the week included an exhibition on Bukhara and Khiva, a theatrical presentation entitled "The Great Silk Road" and a performance by renowned Uzbek artists.

In his speech, the Director-General of UNESCO noted that Bukhara and Khiva, millenniums previously, had formed the spiritual centre that produced the values which had enriched the treasure house of the cultural heritage of humankind.[4]

An extensive cultural and scientific programme was organized in Paris at UNESCO headquarters in April 2009 to commemorate the 2,200th anniversary of Tashkent. Scientific conferences were also held in Tashkent to commemorate that anniversary.

The celebrations held at the international level have thus focused the attention of the international cultural and scientific community on Uzbekistan, and have contributed not only to a definition of the role of its great forefathers and exquisite cities and their contribution to global civilization, but also to increasing the international community's awareness of Uzbekistan's achievements in reviving national spiritual and historical values.

The cooperation between Uzbek and foreign researchers has produced a number of basic works devoted to Tamerlane, Al-Bukhari and Al-Ferghani and the

[4] *Pravda Vostoka* [Pravda of the East], 24 June 1997.

cities of Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent.[5] These works, for the first time, have presented the great heritage of our remarkable forefathers and cities in the light of the complex social and economic events and cultural processes of those times.

A significant outcome of the project entitled "The Silk Road — the Road of Dialogue" was the creation in 1996 of the International Institute for Central Asian Studies in Samarkand, with the participation of 12 countries. The Institute's mission is to contribute to the study of Central Asian history and offer an objective assessment of the processes occurring in Central Asian countries on their modern path of development. In the context of these studies, an essential study by Y. F. Buryakov and A. A. Gritsin, entitled "Mavarannahr on the Great Silk Road", was published in 2003, and an international symposium entitled "The Strabo Route as a part of the Great Silk Road" was held in 2008.

One important outcome of cooperation in the study of Central Asian history between researchers from around the world was the preparation and study of a substantial six-volume history of Central Asian civilization, which offers a comprehensive picture of historical and cultural processes in the Central Asian region, from the Mediterranean to China.

The efforts of this international organization have led to the inclusion on the World Heritage List of the world-renowned cities of Bukhara, Khiva and Shahrisabz; the collection of oriental manuscripts of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan; and the unique Uthman Quran. The World Heritage List includes over 690 monuments and historical sites around the world, including the Palace of Versailles, the Italian cities of Venice and Florence, the Egyptian pyramids and the Taj Mahal in India.[6]

The inclusion of our historical and cultural monuments in the World Heritage List is recognition of their importance. They belong to all of humanity and the international community is responsible for their conservation.

The revival of the Uzbek people's spiritual, historical and cultural values is thus the foundation for national self-determination, the formation and development of national statehood and the spiritual and moral capacity for major transformations and the country's aspirations for the future. The considerable level of international interest focused on these developments in Uzbekistan not only brings recognition of the Government's policy in that area but also draws attention to the contribution of the Uzbek people to world culture and to the unity of universal and national values, which undoubtedly is a vital factor in peaceful relations between the countries of the world.

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[5] *Amir Temur v mirovoy istorii* [Tamerlane in world history], Paris, 1996; *Svet iz glubiny vekov* [light from the depths of centuries], Tashkent, 1998; *Al-Ferghani*, 1999; *Khiva — gorod tysyachi kupolov* [Khiva — city of a thousand cupolas], 1997, 224p; *Bukhara zhemchuzhina Boctoka* [Bukhara, pearl of the East], 224p.

[6] World Heritage List, maintained by the World Heritage Committee, 1998, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 1999.